

II. The Commitment from Our Side

The whole problem is from the human side. We, in general, are not committed to God, as we ought to be.

The Range of our commitment

There are many facets of a believer's commitment including the following:

1. Love

The first and greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength" (Matt 22:37, 38). Breaking this first and greatest commandment is, in other words, committing the greatest sin and mistake of our life. Keeping this commandment is the first and right step in the right way of our religion. So, we "love him because He loved us first" (1 John 4:19).

Certainly we cannot love anyone whom we do not know. Therefore we should know him through his great revelation, which is the Bible. The more we read and study the Bible, the more we know God and love Him. No one loved us as he did and sacrificed His precious blood for us. That is why Jesus said, "He who loves a father or mother, son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37). When we love someone, we love to talk to him (prayer), we love to listen to him (reading the Bible), and love to visit him (going to church) and love to abide in him (communion) and to serve him (ministry). It is written, "Love is the bond of perfection" (Col 3:14) All our works and labours are weighed in God's sight by the amount of love in them (Rev 2:4,5)

2. Obedience

Loving God leads to obeying Him. St Peter said, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). We do not find any sermon by St Mary the Virgin recorded in the New Testament, but we have the essence of all preaching summarised in one statement when she said to the servants in the wedding of Cana of Galilee, "Whatever he says to you do it" (John 2:5). God the Father said the same thing on the Mount of Transfiguration, "This is My beloved son, hear Him" (Matt 17 & Luke 9). God wants us to commit ourselves to doing his will and his commandments. Abraham was a Great man of faith because when God called him to leave his family and land, he obeyed with pleasure and without hesitation. God blessed him greatly and gave him the title "Friend of God" (Gen 12, Heb11 & James 2)

On the contrary, Jonah disobeyed God and exposed his life, reputation and future to a total destruction and discipline. Obey God, no matter what. Do not look at results and don't be discouraged. Take the blessing of keeping his commandments and you will see miracles in your life.

Take God's commandments as a whole and do not select some easy ones and leave (break) the others; and remember that He who said, "You shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not commit adultery", is the same one who said that you shall not lie, you shall not swear, you shall not judge others and you shall not be angry at your brother without cause or else you will be in danger of judgement. He also said, "Do not be drunk of wine but filled with the Holy Spirit" (Eph 5:18). All of his commandments must be kept and this is the proof of our love for him as he said, "He who loves me keeps my commandments and I will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21, 23)

3. Dedication

The Lord set a golden rule when he said "no one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the

one and love the other or else he will be loyal to one and despise the other" (Matt:6:24). This dedication is obvious in the firm decision of Joshua when he said to the children of Israel "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my house we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15).

To be a true Christian means to be dedicated to Christ, as the wife is dedicated to her husband and vice versa, and the soldier is dedicated to his country. We have to be dedicated to his principles, good will and commandments. St Paul put it this way, "Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God" (Romans 6:13)

4. Commitment to the life of repentance

There are two kinds of repentance (1) the repentance of life, and (2) the life of repentance. The repentance of life is the one that happens once in a lifetime, it is a serious change and U-turn, from evil to righteousness, from darkness to light and from the broad way which leads to destruction and hell to the narrow road which leads to glory and eternal life. The repentance of life is like what happened to the prodigal son; when he returned to his father and continued with him and did not leave him anymore. It is like the repentance of Saul of Tarsus, Zaccaeus, the Samaritan woman, Mary magdelene, Levi, Augustine and Moses the Black. But the life of repentance, takes all our life struggling against sin and Satan, growing in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and purifying ourselves day after day, confessing our sins and abiding in Christ through communion. The secret of Daniel's power is in the verse that says, "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies nor with the wine which he drank" (Dan 1:8)

The life of repentance is walking by faith towards perfection, "Be perfect just as your heav-

only father is perfect” (Matt 5:40). The life of repentance requires hating all kinds of sins, whether by thought, word or deed. It is a commitment to holiness, to abstain from sexual immorality, drugs, smoking, evil friendship, worldly songs and dancing and lustful desires. From the positive point of view it involves sticking to the means of grace and church sacraments and Christian virtues.

5. Commitment to the Bible

Psalm 1 praises the man or woman “whose delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he/she meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:2) Psalms 19 and 119 are full of hundreds of blessings and benefits of the word of God. There are ten places in our daily life we should use and enjoy God’s word, mentioned in Deuteronomy 6:6-9; it reads, “And these things which I commanded you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts and on your gates.” So we have an obligation to read the Bible, to study it, to memorise it, to do it and to teach it to others and spread it. In what stage are you now? I hope and pray that everyone reading these lines would make a commitment and VOW NOW before God to start reading the Bible every day no matter how much he/she is tired, exhausted, busy or sick.

6. Commitment to the Church

- Continuous Attendance: To be committed to the church to attend its meetings, liturgies, vespers (Asheiah), Feasts, Prayer Meetings and Bible studies on a regular basis. The key verse that shows the secret of power of the Apostles’ Church reads, “They continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fel-

lowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers” (Acts 2:42)

- Accordingly, no wonder if we read that “The fear of God came upon every soul”, “Many wonders and signs were done”, “All who believed were together”, “They had all things in common and no one had need”, “Continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people”, “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:43-47)
- Committed to the Church doctrine, teaching, dogma and rites, tradition and practices, as shown in the above verses.
- Practicing the Church Sacraments: such as confession, repentance and the Holy Communion regularly according to the guidance of the spiritual father or the father of confession, some of them weekly and some monthly.
- Serving the Church: To be involved in some of its many services and activities like teaching in Sunday schools, Youth Meetings, singing in the choir, helping the needy, visiting the sick, the widows and orphans, cleaning and beautifying the church, Deacons ministry, serving the elderly, keeping order and the work of the ushers, etc.

7. Committed to Prayer

The word of God and prayer are the vital signs of spiritual life. They are like breathing, inhalation and exhalation. The Church asks her congregation to pray seven times a day (agepeya). If you could not pray the seven prayers; then pray four or at least three of them and add to them your own prayers. Widen the range of prayers; pray for yourself and for your needs, your family, friends, the church and the whole world. Start with thanksgiving, confession, express your love to the Lord and for the salvation and blessings of others.



Commitment

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